

John and Emma Wright House  
1506 2nd Avenue  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5830

HABS  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
90-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN AND EMMA WRIGHT HOUSE

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Location: 1506 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1884

Description: While it is one of many three-bay side-gable houses in the Fourth Ward, the Wright House is unusual because of the location of its main entrance in the side-gable end within a small entry porch. The front facade sports two rows of three identical windows. These are evenly spaced but placed a bit left of center. Of frame construction with original horizontal novelty wood siding, the house is also notable for its ornamental window surrounds and cornice. The cornice with its familiar set of four pairs of brackets (and brackets below the side returns) also bears curved incised decorations that play off the window surrounds. These have upward-flaring pediments topped by a central diamond visually joined to projecting lower sills by verticals that flair outward at both lower and upper edges. There is a central brick chimney rising from the roof ridge.

History: This house is of historical interest for several reasons. Unlike most Fourth Ward houses, it sits on a lot originally laid out to face a street rather than an avenue. It is also one of four that were built while on land still owned by John Wright (see also 205 15th St., HABS No. PA-5867). Finally, the house has been moved. It originally occupied the corner lot facing 15th Street and was moved to its current location by Max Kettl in 1916 when he built a more substantial brick-veneered house at the corner.

The four houses on 15th Street owned by John Wright first appeared in his tax assessment for 1884. The 1888 tax book showed Anthony Graupensberger with a half-lot and house worth \$300 at 2nd Avenue and 15th Street, transferred from Wright. The deed is also dated this year--Graupensberger paid \$1,400 for a 30' x 100' lot--and this large sum confirms that a building was already present. Graupensberger, a watchman, used the house as a rental property. His heirs sold the property to Maximilien A. Kettl in August 1909 for \$2,200; at that time the lot contained a two-story frame dwelling.

Max A. Kettl was a shop hand when he lived at 201 15th St. in 1912-13 with Thomas S., a foreman. In 1916 Kettl was assessed as a gang leader at the shops and owner of two houses on this lot. The new house was valued at \$1,800, the "house moved in rear of lot"--the Wright House--at \$800. In 1930 Max's widow, Elizabeth C. Kettl, lived at 201 15th St., with son Regis P., a printer. Ownership was vested in Regis in 1932, although Elizabeth still occupied the brick house in 1939.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1894, 1932. Deed books: 70/188, 204/412, 411/23. City directories. Tax assessment records. Interview with neighbors.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.